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COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE LATIN AMERICAN ECONOMIC SYSTEM

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report was prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolution 47/13 of 29 October 1992 concerning cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System (SELA).

2. In that resolution, the General Assembly:

"1. Takes note with satisfaction of the report of the Secretary-General;

"2. Urges the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to continue broadening and deepening its coordination and mutual support activities with the Latin American Economic System;

"3. Urges the United Nations Development Programme to strengthen and broaden its support to the programmes that the Permanent Secretariat of the Latin American Economic System is carrying out, aimed at complementing the technical assistance activities conducted by the Latin American Economic System;

"4. Urges the specialized agencies and other organizations and programmes of the United Nations system to continue and intensify their support for and cooperation with the activities of the Latin American Economic System;

"5. Requests both the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Permanent Secretary of the Latin American Economic System to assess, at the appropriate time, the implementation of the Agreement between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System, and to report to the General Assembly thereon at its forty-eighth session;

"6. Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution."

3. For the preparation of the present report, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) wrote to the following organizations of the United Nations system requesting an update of their activities with the Latin American Economic System (SELA), to be included in the Secretary-General's report: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Labour Organisation (ILO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Maritime Organization (IMO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Universal Postal Union (UPU), World Bank, World Health Organization (WHO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO), United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), United Nations University (UNU), World Food Council (WFC) and United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). Ten of these organizations sent updated information on their cooperation with SELA. Twelve noted that they did not currently carry out any activities with SELA, although some of them expressed a desire to do so in the future. The following summary was based on all of this information.

II. COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE LATIN AMERICAN ECONOMIC SYSTEM

4. As noted in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session (A/47/463), since the establishment in October 1975 of SELA, considerable cooperation has taken place between organizations, agencies and programmes of the United Nations system, in particular the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and SELA.

5. As the above-mentioned report shows, this cooperation has intensified over the years and has become more diversified in terms of both the areas and the organizations concerned.

6. Cooperation between ECLAC and SELA has consisted, inter alia, in the participation of representatives of ECLAC and SELA in various meetings of the two organizations and in the preparation by ECLAC of specialized documents in various areas to support SELA activities. Listed below are some examples of this cooperation.

7. In the social area, ECLAC has continued to cooperate with SELA within the framework of the activities of the inter-agency group on integrated social policies. ECLAC has acted as the coordinating agency for this group, in which the following international agencies have participated to date: Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE), Latin American Centre of Administration for Development (CLAD), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES), Board of the Cartagena Agreement (JUNAC), Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), Regional Employment Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean (PREALC), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UNESCO and UNICEF.

8. Pursuant to the agreement on the establishment of a social project bank and an information and communications network to support the activities of the group (including preparations for the World Summit for Social Development) adopted at the Third Informal Inter-agency Meeting on Integrated Social Policies, convened by SELA and sponsored jointly with UNESCO, which was held in Caracas on 7 and 8 May 1992, SELA hired a consultant to carry out a study to evaluate the feasibility of this initiative and prepare a proposal for the implementation of a regional social information system and a mechanism for the exchange of experiences within the Group. This preliminary document was analysed at a meeting held at ECLAC with SELA officials in May 1993.

9. ILPES has maintained close and continued coordination of its programme activities with SELA, and the Director of ILPES has participated in periodic working meetings with the Permanent Secretary and other officials of SELA.

10. In the demographic area, ECLAC, through CELADE, has continued to collaborate with SELA. Besides participating in the Inter-agency Meeting on Integrated Social Policies mentioned in paragraph 8, it has maintained close contact with the coordinator of the SELA Project on the Status of Regional Cooperation (PESICRE), in order to update information on CELADE included in that database.

11. In addition, CELADE, through its Latin American Population Documentation System (DOCPAL), has participated in and collaborated with PESICRE and has cooperated with various regional institutions on the Network of Networks project coordinated by the Latin American Association of Development Financing Institutions (ALIDE), which has its headquarters in Lima.

12. In the field of information, the Latin American Centre for Economic and Social Documentation (CLADES) has maintained close contact with SELA with a view to identifying possible areas of cooperation. During the recent mission of a CLADES official, it was agreed that the Centre would prepare a draft report on the areas in which efforts could be combined within the framework of PESICRE. A meeting was also held at ECLAC headquarters in May 1992 as part of a training programme for managers of regional information networks. ECLAC prepared two documents for that meeting, one on the organization and content of the information management training course (LC/L.734), Información y desarrollo series, No. 4, Santiago, Chile, 1993 and the other on a subject-based working proposal for the training programme (LC/L.748), Información y desarrollo series, No. 5, Santiago, Chile, 1993.

13. With respect to international trade, a representative of the International Trade and Transport Division of ECLAC attended a meeting of agencies on trade activities at SELA headquarters in September 1992. The purpose of the meeting was to examine the activities of each agency and analyse the possibilities of coordination and joint action.

14. In collaboration with SELA, ECLAC has been actively participating in the early stages of the UNCTAD/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project on International trade and trade relations for Latin America and the Caribbean (LATINTRADE), which is to be executed during the period 1993-1997. This project will provide support to Latin American and Caribbean countries with regard to various aspects of their international trade relations.

15. There has been a considerable exchange of documentation and information on international trade over the past two years between ECLAC and SELA. Periodic consultations have been held in this regard and fruitful contacts have been established.

16. SELA has carried out a number of activities jointly with units at United Nations Headquarters, including an exchange of documents and information with the Macroeconomic and Social Policy Analysis Division of the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis (DESIPA). The SELA observer in New York is in frequent contact with the Director of that Division, particularly in relation to economic and social issues discussed in the Economic and Social Council. From 18 to 20 January 1993, a staff member of the Developing Economies Section of the Macroeconomic and Social Policy Analysis Division participated in a joint SELA/UNESCO workshop on social development in the context of the adjustment process.

17. A representative of SELA participated in the first seminar of the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development, held in April 1993. For its part, the Science and Technology Branch of the Division of Science, Technology, Energy, Environment and Natural Resources (DESIPA) has also been following activities undertaken by the Latin American Commission on Science and Technology (COLCYT), a subsidiary organ of SELA, with a view to developing joint activities in technology assessment.

18. The Department of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC) participated in a special working group on TCDC in the region convened by SELA and held in September 1992 in Caracas. As a way of assisting SELA, the Department decided to provide financial support to the Information System on TCDC (INFOSELA) for the creation of a computerized register of the capacities and needs of the Latin American and Caribbean countries. This support will be reflected in a joint undertaking between SELA, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Department for Development Support and Management Services. This contribution to technical cooperation among developing countries in the region, which will be of a catalytic nature, will serve to finance the travel of a SELA specialist to install and update the system in SELA member countries with a view to the preparation of a compendium of capacities and needs. It is hoped that IOM will provide the funds needed to cover the daily subsistence allowance of the SELA specialist.

19. Moreover, in the context of the cooperation of the Department for Development Support and Management Services with SELA and the Department of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC), DESIPA participated in the meeting of the Coordination Mechanism for International Bodies and Regional Forums Engaged in TCDC Activities, which was held in Montevideo, Uruguay, from 29 to 31 March 1993, under the sponsorship of SELA, the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA), and other organizations. During the meeting the elements for a regional strategy for TCDC were analysed and recommendations were made to the member countries of the region with regard to the analysis of TCDC strategies for the 1990s which took place at the eighth session of the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, which met in New York from 25 to 28 May 1993.

20. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has maintained close collaboration with SELA, inter alia, through the participation of representatives of FAO and SELA in meetings organized by both organizations, such as the 7th regional meeting of the Working Group on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC), the 7th meeting of the Coordination Mechanism for Regional Bodies and Forums Engaged in TCDC Activities, and the 18th regular meeting of the Latin American Council at the ministerial level.

21. Discussions are under way between FAO and the Action Committee for the Economic and Social Development of Central America (CADESCA), a Central American organization supported by SELA concerning potential areas of collaboration. FAO is interested in cooperating in the implementation of activities related to food security information systems and action programmes as a follow-up to the regional food security project on the identification of the population at risk of food insecurity in Latin America, which it carried out jointly with the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA).

22. The Executive Board of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) at its thirty-eighth session, held in December 1989, decided to accord SELA observer status at the annual sessions of the Governing Council generally held in January. In addition, IFAD sent SELA a draft cooperation agreement, which has not yet been signed, to formalize the cooperation between the two institutions.

23. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has also maintained close cooperation with SELA, through its Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.

24. During the period under review, ILO was represented in the workshop on social development in the context of the adjustment process, which was held in Caracas from 18 to 20 January 1993 and was organized by SELA and the UNESCO office in Caracas. Its purpose was to examine the social situation of Latin America in the context of macroeconomic adjustments and to initiate an exchange of ideas to define a regional position for the World Summit for Social Development. The Regional Employment Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean (PREALC) presented a document on policies to offset the social costs of adjustment.

25. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has continued to cooperate with SELA in areas of common interest.

26. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) confirmed its readiness to extend to SELA, upon request, appropriate cooperation in specific areas relating to the role of shipping in the economic development of the Latin American countries.

27. Cooperation between UNESCO and SELA was reflected in various activities, inter alia, a meeting to coordinate preparations for the course on prospective methods and techniques, which was organized jointly by UNESCO, the Latin American Commission on Science and Technology (COLCYT), the Latin American Institute for Social Research (ILDIS), the School for Social Management Foundation and the Permanent Secretariat of SELA and was held from 8 to 13 May 1992.

28. UNESCO also collaborated with SELA in organizing a workshop in social development in the context of the adjustment process, at which a document on social development and competitiveness in Latin America and the Caribbean was presented.

29. In March 1993, the UNESCO Regional Director for Latin America participated in a working meeting with SELA to discuss cooperation between the two organizations in 1993.

30. In the framework of the Simón Bolívar Programme, financed by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), UNESCO and the Permanent Secretariat of SELA, 120 projects have been identified the execution of which would enable links to be established between the productive sector and the main research centres and universities of the region.

31. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and SELA have held consultations and carried out activities aimed at establishing guidelines for the participation of the Latin American and Caribbean region in the forthcoming UNIDO General Conference. In the framework of preparations for this conference, a meeting will be held from 27 to 29 September, in which all the countries members of SELA and representatives of UNIDO will participate.

32. The 3rd meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean Forum on Intellectual Property Policies was held at SELA headquarters on 20 and 21 July 1992. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) presented a paper on recent changes and trends in patent legislation world wide.

33. WIPO also participated as an observer in the 18th regular meeting of the Latin American Council, held at the ministerial level, and in the 7th meeting of the Coordination Mechanism for Regional Bodies and Forums Engaged in TCDC Activities in Latin America, held in Caracas in September 1992.

34. In cooperation with SELA, WIPO organized a regional seminar on industrial property management and technology transfer in the food-processing industry in Latin America and the Caribbean. The seminar was held at SELA headquarters in Caracas from 1 to 3 June 1993; its purpose was to provide senior officials of Latin American enterprises, organizations and research centres involved in production, marketing and research in the food-processing industry with information on the role of industrial property assets in enterprise management strategies and technology transfer in this field.

35. With respect to coordination with UNDP, in accordance with the mandates of the Latin American Council, the programme of work of the Permanent Secretariat, the guidelines of the International Development Strategy of the United Nations and the main lines of the fifth programming cycle of UNDP, the scope of the UNDP/SELA project (1992-1994) was defined in July 1992 and the following areas were selected for priority action: external economic relations; international trade and external financing; industrialization and innovation, competitiveness and social equity; and regional cooperation and convergence. The agreement regarding the execution of the project was signed on 3 September 1992. The activities described below were carried out within the framework of this project.

36. SELA sponsored the regional TCDC meeting on technological development in the health sector, held in Santiago, Chile, from 6 to 10 July 1992, jointly with UNDP, ECLAC and the Pan-American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO). At that meeting, eight regional projects were identified in the following areas: vaccinations, information systems, biological products, education in the administration of research and technology management, the standardization of regulations, medical and hospital equipment and appliances, medicinal plants, environmental sanitation and protection, and orthopaedic devices, prostheses and rehabilitation. SELA and the other sponsors will initiate action to secure the financial resources needed for the execution of the projects.

37. With the collaboration of the Government of Honduras, UNDP, UNCTAD and the Government of Italy, SELA coordinated the regional seminar on external debt conversion for economic, social and environmental projects, held in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, from 19 to 21 May 1993. The purpose of this seminar, which experts from all the countries members of SELA attended, was to obtain information and enrich the exchange of experience on this topic.

38. SELA organized the coordination meeting for Latin America preparatory to the Eighth Meeting of the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, in which UNDP also participated and which was held in New York from 25 to 28 May 1993. The purpose of the meeting was to adopt a joint position for the Meeting of the High-level Committee, especially with regard to a TCDC strategy for the 1990s.

39. The Inter-Agency Committee to support the project on technical cooperation among countries for health technology development (project convergence), presented by SELA at the Third Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, held at Salvador (Bahía) in Brazil on 15 and 16 July 1993, represents an important inter-agency cooperation effort in the health field, coordinated by SELA. ECLAC, UNDP and PAHO/WHO are participating in the execution of the project.

40. With the support of UNDP, WHO and SELA have collaborated on a programme to promote technical cooperation among developing countries. This project, which has been designated Project Convergence is designed to promote the development of technology in the health sector in Latin America and the Caribbean through the creation of conditions to promote the involvement and collaboration of the public and private sectors in the context of the current regional and subregional economic integration process. The project also provides an

opportunity for multilateral and bilateral agencies to participate in activities designed to strengthen technical cooperation among developing countries in the area of medical technology.

41. SELA, PAHO/WHO, UNDP, ECLAC and UNESCO signed an agreement establishing an Inter-Agency Committee to support Project Convergence. These organizations have established a committee for technical cooperation among developing countries to facilitate inter-agency coordination. SELA acts as the executive secretariat for this committee.

42. Recently, SELA, UNDP, the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA) and PAHO/WHO sponsored an inter-agency meeting in Montevideo, with a view to expanding their mutual collaboration with regard to technical cooperation among developing countries. LAIA will also support Project Convergence. Under the leadership of SELA and with the support of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the five agencies drew up a joint programme which they submitted to the Third Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government.

43. Under this programme, public and private institutions in the member countries are collaborating in the execution of eight regional projects and various other activities.

44. The PAHO/WHO veterinary public health programme does not collaborate with SELA in the execution of projects, but it is involved in subregional projects to promote economic integration, the execution of which requires the signing of formal agreements with SELA. In compliance with that requirement, SELA must approve a project for the formulation of a hemisphere-wide plan for the eradication of foot-and-mouth disease and other projects in the areas of food security, tourism and health.

45. During the period under review, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and SELA further intensified their collaboration. UNCTAD participated in the 18th meeting of the Latin American Council, held in September 1992.

46. In the area of trade, collaboration between UNCTAD and SELA is focused on technical cooperation activities carried out by UNCTAD in the region. SELA is actively participating in the development and initial stages of the new regional programme of technical cooperation on international trade and trade relations for Latin America and the Caribbean (LATINTRADE), which will be the main vehicle for cooperation between the two organizations. SELA provided active assistance in the preparation of the LATINTRADE programme. UNCTAD collaborated with SELA, at both the substantive and the logistical level, in the organization of the 6th SELA consultative meeting on the Uruguay Round and on the needs of the countries of the region for technical assistance in trade negotiations, held in Geneva from 12 to 13 July 1993. An inter-agency meeting on the LATINTRADE project will be held with the participation of SELA, UNDP, ECLAC, the Organization of American States (OAS) and IDB.

47. In the context of continued cooperation between UNCTAD and SELA regarding the reconciliation of environmental and trade policies, in addition to the projects which are included in the programme of work in the proposal for the LATINTRADE project, a number of studies and seminars are being planned relating

to those two areas. UNCTAD will execute this project in close cooperation with SELA and other organizations and with the secretariats of integration institutions in the region. As part of the UNCTAD TRAINFORTRADE project, there are plans to carry out a series of training activities relating to trade and the environment, including the holding of a regional seminar in October 1993 on environmental policies and market access for Latin American and Caribbean countries. The seminar, which is being organized jointly by SELA, ECLAC and UNCTAD, will be hosted by the Government of Colombia. UNCTAD will present a paper as well as a report on packaging and labelling indicating the environmental impact of the products. A number of studies will be presented on environmental policies and standards adopted by the major countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and their impact on market access and competitiveness for Latin American exports. In addition, countries in the region will be invited to present short background notes or studies on their national activities in this area.

48. Subsequent to the joint UNCTAD/SELA/Board of the Cartagena Agreement (JUNAC) workshop on technology, trade and development issues in Latin America in the 1990s (Caracas, June 1990), UNCTAD prepared a project (LATINTEC) designed to strengthen the links between the academic research and development community and the enterprise sector, in which SELA would play an important role. In March 1993, a workshop of experts on coordination between the academic and entrepreneurial sectors in the new competitive climate was held in Buenos Aires. The workshop was organized jointly by the University of Buenos Aires and UNCTAD and was financed by UNDP (TCDC). The participants analysed selected cases and projects relating to the marketing of the results of research and a forum was thus provided for a debate on initiatives taken at the national and international levels and on the outline and orientation of LATINTEC.

49. UNCTAD and SELA jointly organized the first regional seminar on external debt conversion, which was hosted by the Government of Honduras and held in Tegucigalpa from 19 to 21 May 1993. The seminar examined various cases of commercial and official debt conversion, and ways and means of encouraging such operations, especially in the case of official bilateral debt. The seminar was attended by 45 participants from 22 Latin American and Caribbean countries, including senior policy makers from central banks, international and regional institutions, non-governmental organizations and one creditor country. One outcome of the seminar was an offer by the Government of Ecuador to host a high-level consultative meeting on official bilateral debt conversion between Paris Club creditors and Latin American debtor countries, which will take place in Quito in November 1993.

50. The UNEP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean is not involved in any projects with SELA. SELA has, however, participated in ministerial meetings on the environment held in Latin America and the Caribbean.

51. The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) is also not involved in any activities in cooperation with SELA, but it has expressed its willingness to support some SELA activities in the region and to initiate an exchange of publications which would be most useful to INSTRAW in its work on economic issues relating to women.

52. With regard to cooperation between SELA and the United Nations University, the Institute of New Technologies of the University (UNU/INTECH) has initiated a study on the impact of political factors on technology policies and has commissioned several national studies in various Latin American countries members of SELA during the biennium 1992-1993.

53. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) is particularly active in the Latin American and Caribbean region, where it is providing technical assistance to countries on a wide range of issues related to human settlements. These activities are focused on training in human settlements management and enhanced sustainability. Habitat is particularly interested in the formulation of programmes to assist in the socio-economic recovery of the most disadvantaged groups of society.

54. Despite the deep involvement of Habitat in activities relating to human settlements in the region, it has no joint projects with SELA. However, the new Executive Director of Habitat is interested in cooperating with SELA.

III. CONCLUSION

55. It is important to emphasize that the cooperation of SELA with United Nations programmes, organizations and agencies is growing and diversifying and in many areas inter-agency cooperation has been established which permits optimal use to be made of existing resources for the benefit of the countries of the region.